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Viewing cable 07QUITO280, ARMY COMMANDER CANNED; NEW MINDEF NAMED

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#07QUITO280**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07QUITO280	2007-02-05 12:13	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Quito

Appears in these articles:

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2014
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: ARMY COMMANDER CANNED; NEW MINDEF NAMED

Classified By: PolOff Jarahn Hillsman, Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (U) Summary: Fulfilling his promise to replace deceased MinDef Guadalupe Larriva (RefTel) with a female civilian from the southern highland city of Cuenca, President Correa on January 30 named Lorena Escudero as the new Minister of Defense. Escudero, who assumed control of the Ministry of Defense on February 2, is an academic with little government experience and even less defense training. Before handing control of the military over to Escudero, Acting MinDef Ricardo Patino on February 1 fired Army Commander Pedro Machado for his role in Larriva's death. End Summary.

Army Commander Canned

¶2. (U) Acting Minister of Defense Ricardo Patino fired Army Commander Pedro Machado on February 1 for "human errors" that lead to the death of former MinDef Guadalupe Larriva. In a television interview on February 1, Patino said "we gave you (the military) a minister alive and you returned her dead." He expressed his dissatisfaction with the preliminary accident report and said that those at fault would be held accountable. Machado told the press that his departure was necessary to calm tensions, but said that a commander could not be blamed for all that happens in the army. "There are levels of responsibility," he affirmed. Machado warned that unspecified elements within the government were trying to "damage" the Ecuadorian military. Machado was replaced by Brigadier General Guillermo Vasconez.

Shaky, Unqualified MinDef Assumes Office

¶3. (U) President Correa on January 30 announced he would replace Guadalupe Larriva with Cuenca native Lorena Escudero. In a February 1 press conference in Cuenca, a nervous Escudero told the press that she is a strong proponent of regional integration, but said that Ecuador would not be drawn into Plan Colombia. She said that Ecuador would not extend the Manta FOL agreement beyond 2009, and that she would continue Larriva's efforts to increase the military's social role. Escudero committed to push for salary increases, continue defense reforms, and signaled that military divestment from the economy would also top her agenda. Escudero quietly assumed control of the Ecuadorian military on February 2.

Biographical Information

¶4. (U) Escudero, 41, is a native of Cuenca, Azuay province. She is divorced with two children. Escudero holds a degree in education with an emphasis in philosophy, sociology, and economics from the University of Cuenca. She has masters in Latin American Studies from Mexico's National Autonomy University and is currently working towards a doctorate in Latin America Studies from the Spanish Alicante University.

¶5. (U) Escudero has worked since 2002 as director of the Center for Social Sciences and Latin American Politics at the University of Cuenca. She has published numerous works on regional integration, and has worked as a consultant on immigration related issues. Escudero reportedly worked on Correa's presidential campaign, and served as coordinator of the Cuenca University and Citizens' Front for a Constituent Assembly.

Comment

¶6. (C) While intelligent, Escudero certainly appears to lack the background and qualifications to head Ecuador's military and meet the security challenges the nation faces. Larriva was similarly under-qualified in terms of knowledge, but had

the proven toughness and sharp elbows from political party life to compensate. Escudero will face a suspicious military establishment, many of whom will be hoping to see her fail. Let's hope our friendly offers of help will resonant amid these tensions; we will seek to engage the new MinDef early to discuss CN/CT cooperation, and to offer, where appropriate, USG assistance in building a more professional and informed defense structure.

JEWELL